

socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

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**Fake
News**

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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of



policies to patch up capitalism. We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and

Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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Editorial

Capitalism doesn't care

IF THERE is one thing that capitalism is good at, it is generating crises. A report by the charity, Age UK, has warned that social care in England is facing collapse in certain areas. Increasing numbers of elderly people find themselves being denied the healthcare they need. Is this because there are not enough trained staff and care facilities available? No, there are plenty of those. As ever in capitalism, the problem boils down to money, or in this case, the lack of it.

According to a report from the Nuffield Trust, Central Government funding for local authorities in England has been reduced by 14 percent in real terms from 2011/12 to 2014/15. At the same time, the number of people over the age of 85 has risen by a third. As the amount of fees paid by local authorities for care homes has fallen and staff costs have risen, many care homes have been forced to close. The upshot is that many old people are having to stay in NHS hospitals. The Local Government Association estimates that there will be at least a £2.6 billion shortfall in the provision of social

care by 2020.

David Hodge, the Conservative leader of the Surrey Council, was moved to call a referendum to raise council taxes by 15 percent to ease the financial shortages. However, this plan has since been abandoned and the council has settled for a rise of 5 percent. Some suspect that a 'sweetheart' deal was arranged where the government would provide more funds to the council if it dropped its plans for a referendum.

The crisis has fallen hardest on working class people from poorer areas. In more wealthy areas, greater income from business rates and more prosperous pensioners contributing to their own care have softened the impact of reduced funding.

It is not only elderly people who are affected, many disabled people have found themselves without the care they need and some have become more ill as a result.

Why are funds for social care being slashed? The answer lies in the austerity cuts that the government has imposed in

response to the financial crisis of 2008-2009. The government had to cut its own spending in order to improve its own finances and reduce the financial burden on businesses, so that they may become profitable again. The cuts, inevitably, had to fall on welfare services.

The leftists blame the Tories and call for more social spending. However, Labour governments in the 1960s and 1970s were compelled to cut their expenditure in response to the economic crises that they faced. In the 2010 General Election, Labour, like the Tories, pledged to make large public expenditure cuts.

The Junior Health Minister David Mowat, has suggested that families should do more to care for their elderly relatives. So, according to him, the crisis is not a social problem, but a case of selfish workers failing in their family duties.

This appalling treatment of working class elderly and other 'vulnerable' people reveals yet again that under capitalism profits must come before human welfare.

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Coprophilia

WHICH OF these news stories is true: The Queen threatened to abdicate if the Brexit vote won; the Pope supported Donald Trump for president; Hillary Clinton sold guns to ISIS; the Pope called fake news purveyors ‘coprophages’ (shit-eaters)?

Just the last one is true. And you can't blame the Pope for swearing in Greek. Actor Denzel Washington was also incandescent with rage after a fake news story identifying him as a Trump supporter went viral. Fake news is big news since the US presidential elections were riddled with it, not least because many of the hoax items (aka blatant lies) seemed to stem from the Trump camp itself. When a quasi-secret meeting of senior Facebook executives suggested that Facebook, also riddled with fake news, had influenced public perceptions to the extent of altering the outcome of the elections, CEO Mark Zuckerberg ridiculed the idea, only to change his mind a few days later and agree to new measures to start flagging suspect stories. When confronted with the same question regarding Google's inadvertent promotion of fake news influencing the election result, its CEO responded simply “Sure”, and agreed immediately to work on ways to block them.

The nub of the matter is that where once you could tell a satire from a genuine story if only because the satirists did not have the means to make their products look authentic, now anyone can create a genuine-looking website. If you are tempted to cite a news story from the National Report, Boston Tribune, Denver Guardian, Empire Herald, News Buzz Daily or United Media Publishing, you have been conned because they are all fake news sites, and there are hundreds more.

Journalists aren't immune either. In a rush to get stories out, or to follow the day's fastest bandwagons, journalists often publish first and check later, thus contributing to the fake

virology. A study of US TV stations revealed that up to a third of their news reports contained unchecked information culled from social media sources which turned out to be false ('The rise and rise of fake news', BBC Online, 6 November).

So, what's the deal with fake news? Money, in a word. There are towns in Macedonia and other poor countries where fake news generation is the main industry and source of employment (*Wired* Online, 8 December). The BBC article above cites a prominent shit-eater talking about the advertising revenue derived from so-called click-bait designed to pander to prejudices: “We've had stories that have made \$10,000. We're constantly trying to tune into feelings that we think that people already have or want to have. Recently we did a story about Hillary Clinton being fed the answers prior to the debate. It was all fake - but that sort of headline gets into the right wing bubble and they run with it.” An independent researcher agrees: “There's a lot of confirmation bias. A lot of people want proof that their world view is the accurate and appropriate one.”

But not just any people, conservatives in particular. One faker claims to have helped get Trump elected: “My sites were picked up by Trump supporters all the time... His followers don't fact-check anything – they'll post everything, believe anything” (*New Scientist*, 7 December). Another complained that liberals are harder to dupe: “We've tried to do [fake news with] liberals. It just has never worked, it never takes off. You'll get debunked within the first two comments and then the whole thing just kind of fizzles out” (*Washington Post*, 7 December).

A recent UCLA study has indeed concluded that conservatives are more likely to believe fake news if it is in the form of a threat which rings true in their world view (<http://tinyurl.com/hyvrpn>). It's not just about the money. *Wired Magazine* points out that the past 30 years has seen a complete capsizing of news media.

Where once a few big news broadcasters churned out a bland and monotonous news agenda designed not to appeal but to avoid offence, now in the ‘post-truth era’ a plethora of small agencies are actively hunting audiences by targeting passionately-held niche opinions. Moreover the power to propagate stories has passed from news editors to readers, and one study suggests that anger is the key motivating factor in spreading stories - the angrier the reader is about a story, the more likely they will share it. “Reasonableness gets you no points,” says one former Facebook VP (*Wired*, 14 February).

So on this argument the people most likely to share fake news are angry right-wingers with no great interest in objective reality. Not surprisingly, some commentators fear that democracy is suffocating in a steam of rage-fuelled stupidity. It's as if someone has turned the gas stove up, and now everybody's boiling. No wonder politics seems to be going through a phase change. The lukewarm centrism of the past few decades is fast giving way to aggressive and polarised extremes that must seem unprecedented to anyone under the age of 40.

Would it therefore be perverse to suggest that fake news is a good thing? After all there is a sense in which most of the news is fake anyway, if one considers how ‘real’ stories about the number of infant deaths from preventable disease or hunger, or the number of people living on the street or in tents, virtually never appear in the news, which is instead obsessed with celeb gossip and party political trivia.

The capitalist class as a whole used to control workers by withholding information wherever possible. Now there's too much information and misinformation, and workers will either sink or learn to swim. In all the fakery this one fact must stand out as obvious, even to the most fact-averse conservative.

If you had to ‘sell’ the idea of capitalism to people on a socialist planet they'd laugh at you. There'd be nothing in it for them except misery and slavery. Most people don't support capitalism because they think it is perfect or even particularly pleasant. They support it because they think they've got no choice, and they think that because they are hypnotised by its bogus ideology, its bogus values and its bogus leaders. Capitalism is adaptive and very clever at whitewashing itself. Our hope is that, in a new climate of radical scepticism which even conservatives can't be immune to, perhaps the whitewash won't wash for much longer.

PJS



No gods, no masters?- Pagan Anarchism

On 29 September 2016, one user of the website 'revleft' introduced themselves as follows: 'I've struggled to find information on different political theories that wasn't heavily academic and inaccessible to me as someone with cognitive disabilities and neurodivergencies that otherwise make it *really hard* to understand a lot of the leftist "sub-groups" I guess I'll call them? Ideologies? Only the Pagan Anti-Capitalist Primer and the Gods and Radicals website in general has actually made any of this accessible to me so far'.

The 'Gods and Radicals' website (godsandrads.org) publishes the twice-yearly publication *Beautiful Resistance* and published the *Pagan Anti-Capitalist Primer* in 2015, written by Alley Valkyrie (Nightingale Public Advocacy Collection, respectexistence.org) and Rhyd Wildermuth (paganarch.com, Managing Editor at Gods and Radicals):

'Once, humans made contracts with the land and the gods for sovereignty. Take too much and the land revolted with famine or pestilence. ... We Pagans are trying to re-enchant the world, to bring back the magic of the forests and the mountains. We are trying to hear and revere the wild places, the sacred forgotten places, the spirits of ocean and rivers and lakes. And yet Capitalism is always poisoning these places because it considers nothing sacred except profit, nothing holy except wealth.'

'Grand programs and one-size-fits-all

solutions don't work... One answer cannot possibly fit every single one of the almost 8 billion people sharing this planet with us. Anyone who does come up with that answer should probably be shot on sight, as they're pretty likely gonna start shooting people themselves pretty soon. Besides, 'one-answer' sounds a lot like 'one-god,' and we Pagans have lots of reason to be rue [sic] that one-god trend.'

The Primer goes on to urge the reader to 'Build Community', 'Make Common Cause', 'Invest in Each Other, Divest from Capitalism', 'Consume Less, Create More' and 'Resist Often and Everywhere'. This 'political theory' wasn't clear or 'accessible' and although this is only a 32 page e-zine, various other 'pagan anarchist' websites weren't either. Not even the description of the book titled *Pagan Anarchism* (2016), by Christopher Scott Thomas could help;

'Witches who poison bosses and landlords. Slave revolts instigated by a god of ecstasy. Eviction notices issued in the name of land spirits and Faerie queens. A ghostly general leading loom-breakers. Elves who destroy factories. Were these all merely myths, they'd still be more true than the superstitions upholding Empire and Capital. Yet they're not myths, but our own history: the history of uprisings, of a fierce magic and a revolutionary current woven throughout the threads of Paganism and anarchism.'

This is a fantasy and not one likely to be welcomed by

anarchists (or even some 'pagans' judging by comments online). Three quotes by Marx are included in the *Pagan Anti-Capitalist Primer*, but Marx and socialists have always rejected superstition including 'paganism'. Marx called this rejection of superstition part of 'materialism'. As Marx wrote: 'The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.'

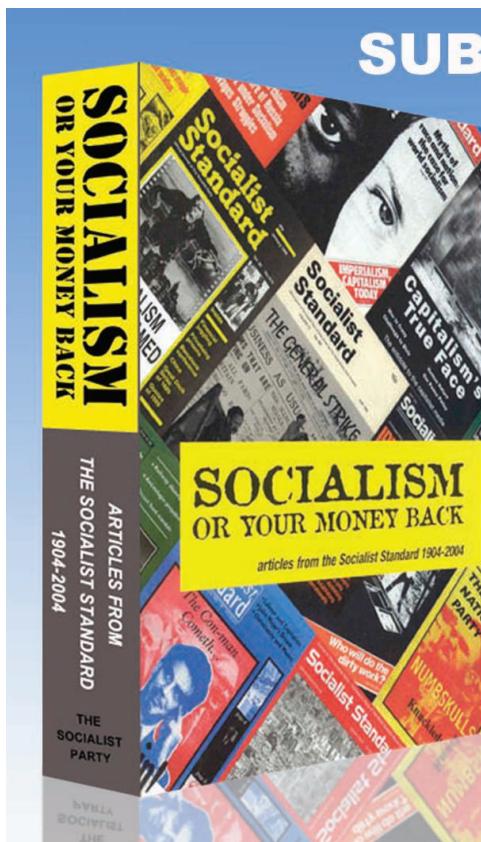
The preface to the *German Ideology* reads '... men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down

before their creations. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away.'

Religious superstition doesn't have to be monotheistic, ostensibly apolitical, Abrahamic or even

an organised religion to be opposed by socialists as a barrier to socialism. This includes 'pagan anarchism'.

DJW



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THE INDEPENDENT

Russia 1917 as we saw it

We begin a monthly series of excerpts from the Socialist Standard of the time with what we said about events in Russia in 1905 which Lenin described as a 'dress rehearsal' for 1917.

THE ENTRY of Russia into the stage of machine production and international commercial inter-communication made it essential that there should be a limitation of the aristocracy which had hitherto dominated that empire. To engage in competition for foreign and neutral markets with other commercial countries rendered it necessary that the press should be removed from the censorship of the ruling class, so that the widest publicity should be given to matters concerning commerce; that education should become more general, so that the worker might become a more efficient machine minder; that freedom of contract should be exhibited in all trade relations between merchants and manufacturers, so as to secure equality of competition.

With an autocracy interfering in all matters, private or public, these freedoms desired by the middle-

class could not be secured, so that it was but a question of time how soon the growing middle-class would seek to secure political power for itself. This could only be obtained by the establishment of a constitutional government, either of the republican or of the monarchical form. (...)

The working-class, too, – that class which has to carry on the battles of its masters – began to manifest signs of unrest. Strike has followed strike in all parts of Russia. The desires expressed have been for economic and political reform on the part of the workers, for political reform on the part of the middle-class.

In order to gain those desires a large number of the discontented wished to make a peaceful demonstration before the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. These were no revolutionists! they did not belong to Socialist Societies, nor did they believe in Socialist principles! They were but unlettered working men with middle-class leaders, who believed that the Czar – the father of his people – had but to learn of their wrongs to redress them.

Poor misguided workers! Foolish you, to believe that you could gain redress except from among yourselves. A ruling class whose interests are opposed unto yours will do nothing for YOU. You must emancipate yourselves.

This lesson taught the workers in many countries, had yet to be learnt by the Russian working-class. They had

not sufficiently learnt that in other countries the military was a weapon used to quell strikes. (...)

Now this lesson is being taught in autocratic Russia, as it has been taught in Monarchical England and Republican France. Hundreds of men, women and children have been butchered in the streets of St. Petersburg. In other centres, too, a like answer has been given to the demands of the workers. The class struggle manifests itself clearly, and what will be the result in Russia? We fear that the result will be but the victory of the middle-class. The Constitutionalists in Russia in 1905 will, like the Liberals in England in 1831, and the French middle-class in 1789, 1830, and 1848, use the working-class for their own ends, and then throw them over. The Russian worker is, we fear, too illiterate to understand clearly his own class interest, and will, therefore, need years of education before he takes his place with the vanguard of the international working-class revolution. (*Socialist Standard*, February 1905). Full article: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1900s/1905/no-6-february-1905/russia-revolution-and-after)



Trumps – or trumpery?

IN HIS speech when installed as President in January, Donald Trump declared that 'from this moment on it's going to be America first', promising 'Every decision on trade, on taxes, on migration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.'

Theresa May had also promised to put the interests of those from 'an ordinary working class family' before those of the 'privileged few' when she became Prime Minister last July. Only she couldn't proclaim 'Britain First', as that's the name of a fascist party here.

But they are advocating different, even opposing, ways of trying to benefit workers. Trump's campaign rhetoric was about preserving the jobs of American workers through protective tariffs against imports. May, on the other hand, sees the way as more free trade, more globalisation. In a rather fanciful interpretation of the result of the EU

referendum, she told the annual January gathering of the global elite in Davos that Leave voters were people who 'chose to build a truly global Britain' (*Times*, 20 January).

This is not an interpretation shared by most commentators. They noted the high vote to Leave in areas where industries involving heavy manual labour – coal, steel, shipbuilding – had been shut down, precisely because it had become cheaper to manufacture these products elsewhere in the world. These voters were certainly not voting for the more of the same that 'a truly global Britain' will involve. That was the view only of a few of the leaders of the Leave campaign who were doctrinaire 'free' marketeers.

Free trade, i.e., more globalisation, certainly won't help, almost by definition, those 'left behind by globalisation'. But what about protectionism?

The demand for protective tariffs has been the knee jerk reaction of trade unions in industries in difficulty because of foreign competition. In his hunt for votes Trump echoed this view, with some success in areas where workers wouldn't normally vote for a Republican business tycoon. He is making a big show of honouring this election pledge, declaring when he withdrew the US from the Trans

Pacific Partnership (TPP) that doing this was 'a good thing for the American worker' (*Times*, 24 January). He doesn't like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) either and will no doubt finally scupper the TTIP deal with the EU.

These trade agreements were in the interest of important sections of the US capitalist class – those wanting more security for their overseas investments, those wanting protection for their 'intellectual property', agribusinesses wanting to break into the EU market, and, yes, manufacturers wanting to move the production of some components to cheaper parts of the world.

Scraping these trade and investment deals won't be welcomed by a large part of the US capitalist class. If Trump really puts jobs for American workers ahead of the profits of its capitalists he will come unstuck, just as left-wing governments have found. If, as a result, capitalists make less profits they will have less to invest and there'll be fewer jobs. So, expect only token measures (TPP was dead in the water anyway) and 'U turns'. Not that protecting the jobs of some workers at the expense of other workers is a worthy cause.



Farewell To Tristram

THERE ARE a number of personal qualities which need to be developed by anyone with ambitions to rise to the top through the pressured universe of politics. For one there is the motivation to refashion the meaning of certain words so that, for example, poverty can be described as security, ruthless calculation as an enduring concern for human fallibility, a ready resort to falsehood as an unshakeable devotion to truth. Also an energising requirement of a talent to face full up to the observant cameras. A recent example of this is Tristram Julian Hunt who, apart from being encouraged to prefix his names with the word Honourable as the son of Baron Hunt of Chesterton and who performed so satisfactorily at Cambridge as to earn the title of a FRHistS, won his way into Parliament as the MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central. Until, that is, he was offered the job of Director of the world-respected Victoria and Albert Museum. And apart from all that the 6ft 3 Hunt is a past-master at the photo pose, suitably arranged for someone on the climb – looking straight through to the adoring public beyond with a gently-smiling expression of combined strength and human concern. It also helps to have some relevant architectural masterpiece as a background – in Hunt's case Westminster Bridge, Big Ben – and to offer a fringe of youthfully ruffled hair across a brain-stuffed forehead.

Stoke-On Trent

This pose was at one with the fact that Hunt had been more or less dumped on the Stoke constituency. Before that he had been rejected as an applicant for the candidature at two other seats. At some stage he had been noticed by Lord Mandelson, Labour's master of dark manipulation (once described by Hunt, after he had been drinking, as '...the most important ****ing minister in this ****ing government') as a rising star in the drive to turn the party away from the bad old days of attachment to Clause Four. Time was short then to prepare for the 2010 election so Hunt was selected as the Labour candidate (in some quarters said to have been 'parachuted in') for Stoke by the National Executive without any reference to the short list prepared by the local Party. This provoked the secretary Gary Elsby, who regarded himself as the obvious choice, to be angry enough to get himself nominated as an Independent candidate – with the full title of 'Gary Labour Candidate Born In Stoke-On-Trent Elsby' and to annoy the local party by using the red rose to decorate his election

literature. But he received a total of 399 votes against the 12,605 which ushered Hunt into the Commons – which did not apparently instruct Elsby about the cynically determined methods so readily applied by the parties of capitalism when they are under pressure.

Education

In spite of his powerful backers, with the implied assumption that he would soon be among the leading political lights in Westminster, Hunt's time there was not free of emergencies and doubt. His performance did not in general come up to expectations as he failed to deal with the theatrically loutish bullying. After a short spell as a Shadow Secretary of State for Education he progressed into the Shadow Cabinet in full charge of the Education portfolio, which the more envious of his colleagues described as him being 'forced like a stick of rhubarb'. He did not come up to the demands of his new responsibilities, in particular those originating from his special rival Michael Gove who wallowed in overseeing Education where his own inadequacies did not prevent him sneering at Hunt for '...inconsistencies thy name is Tristram'. In February 2014 Hunt produced a book about Frederick Engels, praised by one reviewer for its 'affectionate objectivity', but he was not thereby persuaded against breaking a picket line of London University academics who were on strike over cuts in pay. Shortly after this it was revealed that he had received some £74,655 in payment

for a research assistant by the financial adviser firm Price Waterhouse and Cooper, who deny having any political associations but agree that they '...provide limited and fully disclosed technical support to the main political parties in areas where our expertise and knowledge of the business environment can help them better understand technical matters and the consequences of their policy proposals.'

Victoria And Albert

But as his disenchantment with the prospects of a life in politics became more obvious Hunt told the Labour Club at Cambridge University: 'You are the top one per cent. The Labour Party is in the shit'. Which was a forerunner to his decision in September 2015 to try to appease his 'substantial political differences' with the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn by resigning from the Shadow Cabinet. When he was interviewed last September about the Labour conference, where he was said to have 'injected some exuberance into the proceedings with a spirited speech that verged on stand-up comedy', Hunt did not so much as hint at any doubts about continuing as the MP for Stoke: 'It is a profound privilege being an MP but you want to have Labour in charge. That's what we're here for'. But three months later he announced that he would be resigning from the Commons to take that equally glamorous – and much better paid – job as the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum. An especially pertinent comment on this came from ex-Chancellor George Osborne, who wondered if there will ever be another Labour MP by the name of Tristram (Osborne's first name is Gideon). Hunt commented that he was '...sorry to put you, the party and the people of Stoke-on-Trent through a by-election. I have no desire to rock the boat'. But the stability of that boat is in doubt. The constituency has been damaged by the decline in the potteries and of the clay and coal extraction which historically provided its wealth. Unemployment has been well above the national average and it recently needed an intense, high profile charity campaign to ensure that the famous Wedgwood Collection should stay in Barlaston while on loan from the Victoria and Albert. The exhibition had been threatened by a debt of £144 million resulting from a subsidiary being broken up and sold – as ordered by rulings from the High Court and the Attorney General. Just another episode in the history of Tristram Hunt and his political ambitions, typical of the blundering politics of capitalism leading to inhuman cynicism and stress.

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Migration internal and external

IT IS hard not to take notice of the building of fences and walls to keep out unwelcome foreigners, like Trump's Mexican Wall to stop Hispanics and Fortress Europe's barriers to repel those who seek a better life. The media thrives on feeding the fear of invading and swarming hordes of fellow human beings, who maybe are part of our common humanity but for the xenophobes and nationalists, not deserving of a humanitarian reception or a compassionate welcome.

It is easy to forget that throughout history peoples have always been on the move and the most prolific migration has not always been cross-border migration but within nations. Brexit was fuelled not by Syrian refugee arrivals but by the arrival of Polish plumbers and Portuguese crop-pickers, citizens from other EU regions. The first dismantling of migrant camps and deportations because of an 'alien' identity were not those fleeing from the current Middle East conflagrations but the Roma who had travelled westwards across Europe in search of prosperity rather than poverty, seeking safety and security from discrimination.

It is all too convenient to forget that some of the biggest movements of peoples have been the migration of those living in destitute rural regions to the urban centres and cities. In the United States, millions of African-Americans departed the Deep South countryside and found homes and work in the cities, even if it meant the hardship of being cheap labour and living in the inner-city ghettos yet bringing us the music of the Chicago, Detroit and St. Louis blues.

With the threat of climate-change refugees looming larger, the events of the 1930s Dust-Bowl years which inspired Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* should be remembered when the Okies faced Californian 'border patrol' blockades turning them back.

The Enclosures may now be only text in British history books but for African and Asian small farmers, land-grabs continue

and the teeming shanty-towns of megacities are the only survival route for the displaced.

China

Globally, the biggest migration of people is taking place in China. Millions of rural workers have left their villages in search of work in the booming sea-board regions where most of the factories are situated. Research by Kam Wing Chan of the University of Washington suggests the volume of rural-urban migration in such a short period is likely the largest in human history. Much of China's countryside is now villages populated primarily by elderly people and children. With more and more young men leaving to work in the cities, farming is facing a huge threat.

In 2015 there was a total of 277.5 million migrant workers (36 percent of the total workforce of 770 million) in China, with the prospect of another 243 million migrants by 2025, which will take the urban population up to nearly 1 billion people. This population of migrants would represent almost 40 percent of the total urban population, almost three times the current level. A 2002 survey showed that over 80 percent of migrants worked seven days per week, and only 7 percent of workers' working time was in accordance with what the law regulated. In terms of wages, although labour law regulates a minimum wage, many employers either ignore the regulation or consider it to be the maximum wage. Migrant workers make up 80 percent of the deaths in mining, construction, and chemical factories. And about 90 percent of those suffering from work-related diseases are migrant workers.

The hukou system, a kind of internal passport structure limiting access to public services, is based on the birthplace of the holder and restricts the mobility of the population. It was designed to tie farmers to the land in order to secure agricultural supply after famine caused at least 30 million deaths, but is now undergoing much needed reform.

According to hukou, Chinese workers are divided into either rural or urban registrations. Even though they may work in the cities, rural residents have rural household registration, which is the same for farmers or other agricultural workers. In addition, hukou is not determined according to where a worker lives, but rather on a hereditary basis. That is, for rural residents, even though they work and live in the cities, they will have a rural household registration. This is like saying a person born and raised in Lancashire who then moves to London is an immigrant. Migrant workers are generally excluded from the basic provisions for housing, social security and education for their children that their local neighbours enjoy. Now, many wish to abolish the system in its entirety. The Charter 08 manifesto calls for change which 'gives every citizen the same constitutional rights and the same freedom to choose where to live'.

In 2014, announcements regarding hukou reform were made, coinciding with a new urbanisation plan, which focuses on moving more rural residents into towns and cities. In all of these efforts, reforms are in small and mid-size cities, many of which in the past were newly built and previously described as ghost cities for lack of inhabitants. Shanghai and Guangzhou have adopted points-based criteria on education, home ownership, etc. However, according to one report, only 26,000 of 300,000 qualified migrants obtained a local hukou in Shanghai by the end of 2015.

There will be no prescription where people should live or move to in a socialist world. It will be entirely up to them as free individuals in a free society, for in a socialist society, dire poverty that drives migration will disappear and most people will not wish to migrate. Of course, people will still travel and visit other parts of the world and this is a good thing. Cultural diversity is something that needs to be nurtured, fostered and above all experienced.

ALJO



Decision-making

How to meet

*In January – February 2017 the journals of the American leftist organization Solidarity (*Solidarity and Against the Current*) published a stimulating article by Sam Friedman entitled ‘Creating a Socialism that Meets Needs’ (<http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/4866>). The author considers how production decisions might be made in a socialist society.*

First a few words on Friedman’s political affiliation. His conception of socialism is broadly consistent with that of the World Socialist Movement (WSM), though he may have a different understanding of the road leading to socialism. He makes positive references to several works of Raya Dunayevskaya, who was Trotsky’s secretary during his Mexican exile but broke with him in 1939 over his insistence that the Soviet Union remained a ‘workers’ state’ (she regarded it as state capitalist, as we do). She then created a new school of thought that she called “Marxist Humanism”. Thus the author appears to belong to a tendency that has its origins in the Trotskyist branch of Leninism (Bolshevism) but has moved some distance away from Leninism and toward genuine socialist positions.

Consistent conceptions of socialism

Returning to Friedman’s article, why can we say that his conception of socialism is broadly consistent with ours? Above all, because he contrasts his own conception with the ideas of most other recent left-wing writers on post-capitalist society, who advocate a ‘market socialism’ in which worker-owned firms still hire labour and compete with one another to sell commodities on the market. He argues (as do we) that even if such a system were initially to differ in some ways from current forms of private or state capitalism it would inevitably degenerate into them.

In the author’s conception of socialism production is guided not by blind market processes but by decisions consciously and democratically made in the interests of the community

as a whole. ‘Exchange’ is replaced by distribution. Aggregate output is no longer measured and assessed in terms of ‘growth’. All this corresponds to how the WSM views socialism or communism.

In contrast to Leninist doctrine, moreover, Friedman does not relegate this non-market and needs-oriented system to the remote future of a ‘higher stage’ of the new society – ‘communism’ as opposed to ‘socialism’. It is to be established immediately upon the conquest of power by the working class.

How to determine needs?

Like the WSM, Friedman states that production in socialism will be ‘for use not for profit’ and that its purpose will be to ‘meet human needs’. This, however, leaves unanswered the question of how to determine what human needs are.

Our literature frequently gives a simple answer to this question. Individuals will decide for themselves what goods they need. They will have free access to distribution centres where all desired goods are available in abundance. The advance of automation and robotics has made it technically possible to generate such abundance with a minimum of human labour. Elimination of the waste inherent in the money system will also play its part. (‘Money – a waste of resources’, Socialist Standard, July 2011).

On the other hand, we have also suggested that socialist society may for various reasons make a democratic decision ‘not to produce certain things even if quite a few people want them’ (‘Free access to what? Some problems of consumption in socialism’, Socialist Standard, July 2007). Another article made a specific suggestion that socialist society might decide not to produce cars (‘Cars and socialism’, Socialist Standard, March 2013).

The author makes a similar point when he argues that ‘needs’ for specific kinds of goods will be met only after they have been ‘socially validated’ – that is, after all the possible negative as well as positive consequences of their production and consumption for people and for the environment have been assessed through the democratic institutions and procedures of socialist society. The needs of the community are to be determined socially and not just by aggregating the

in Socialism: Needs ?



expressed needs of individuals.

Friedman's emphasis on the social validation of needs is connected with his view of socialism in its early stages as a system operating under great stress. He does not view it as a society of abundance. This is not to say that he denies the potential for abundance. Rather, he foresees that by the time that socialism is established the human race will be embroiled in severe climatic, environmental and social crises. Top priority will have to be given to the tasks of coping with and gradually overcoming these crises. Enormous efforts will be required to halt and reverse global warming, care for masses of environmental and other refugees, and improve the living conditions of the world's slum dwellers.

For a considerable period, therefore, the potential for abundance will not be fully realized. The author speaks only of achieving a 'decency living standard' for everyone. For instance, the choice of crops to grow will have to depend not primarily on what people prefer to eat but on how susceptible their cultivation is to drought, floods, and other extreme weather events (this example is ours).

A dual structure of decision making

Friedman's conception of decision-making in socialism, like that of the WSM, consists of two elements. The first is the proceedings of elected councils at various levels, supplemented by procedures of direct democracy such as referenda. The second is the 'requests' (Friedman's term) or 'orders' – the term used in the article 'Supply and needs in socialism' (Socialist Standard, July 1984) – that circulate within the network of production and distribution for material inputs required to maintain stocks of consumer goods at levels sufficient to meet individual needs.

For this sort of dual structure to work well it is necessary for the division of tasks between the two elements and their mode of interaction to be clear and effective. For example, the councils could concentrate on major decisions concerning the overall pattern of production facilities and supporting infrastructure. In order to prevent overloading of their agendas, fraught with the risk of neglect of their proper function, they must avoid entanglement in detailed decision making – although they might issue guidelines to assist those

responsible for making detailed decisions.

Routine operational issues are better handled by direct consultation between workgroups. Provided that requests are reliably fulfilled, their circulation should achieve the desired result automatically. However, Friedman seems to envisage the councils functioning as clearing houses that receive and coordinate requests, assess how 'reasonable' they are, and find workgroups able and willing to fulfil them.

Reliable fulfillment of requests?

Why does Friedman assign this burdensome task to the councils? The key point is that he does not assume that workgroups can be relied upon to fulfil requests that they receive. A workgroup may deny a request because it disagrees with the associated production decision – he thinks it should have the right to do this – or for less legitimate reasons, in which case it might be subjected to 'gentle community and perhaps organizational social pressure' (whatever that may mean).

But how can the true motive be discerned? Surely all denials of requests would be justified by reference to the sole legitimate rationale – principled disagreement. For example, a factory might refuse to fulfil a request to change its output mix to meet new consumer preferences on the grounds that it considers the request 'frivolous' when its real concern is to avoid the inconvenience of reorganizing its operations.

By definition socialism is a society of free people. They cannot be compelled to do what they do not want to do, either by brute force or (as in capitalism) by threats to their livelihood. We have to assume that they will be sufficiently responsible and self-disciplined voluntarily to do whatever may be required to implement a democratically made decision, even if they disagree with that decision – unless, arguably, they have good reason to regard the decision as dangerously incompetent (if, say, a council has approved an unsafe design for a nuclear reactor). Otherwise socialism will have to acquire effective means of compulsion, but then it will be socialism no longer. This is one reason why socialism has to be established by a majority of conscious socialists.

STEFAN

Bourgeois Blues



The Future of a Collusion

*I'll tip my hat to the new
constitution
Take a bow
for the new
revolution
Smile and grin at
the change all around
Pick up my guitar and play
Just like yesterday
Then I'll get on my knees
and pray
We don't get fooled
again'*

The recent presidential election in the US has left many people around the world confused if not anxious. Yet worrying about Donald Trump This and Donald Trump That misses the point — and gives the Left altogether too much credit.

The Trump victory demonstrates that the capitalist class has any revolutionary purpose it once had. It rose to power having seduced its creature, the working class, to help it seize power in revolutions all over the world, most typically those in mid-19th century Europe. To accomplish this feat, it made a radical switch in the Romantic era, from fulminating against the menace of letting the working class govern — excoriated as ‘a great beast’ (The People) by Alexander Hamilton — to making common cause with its own class enemies, on the promise of indefinite rewards once the bourgeois middle class took power.

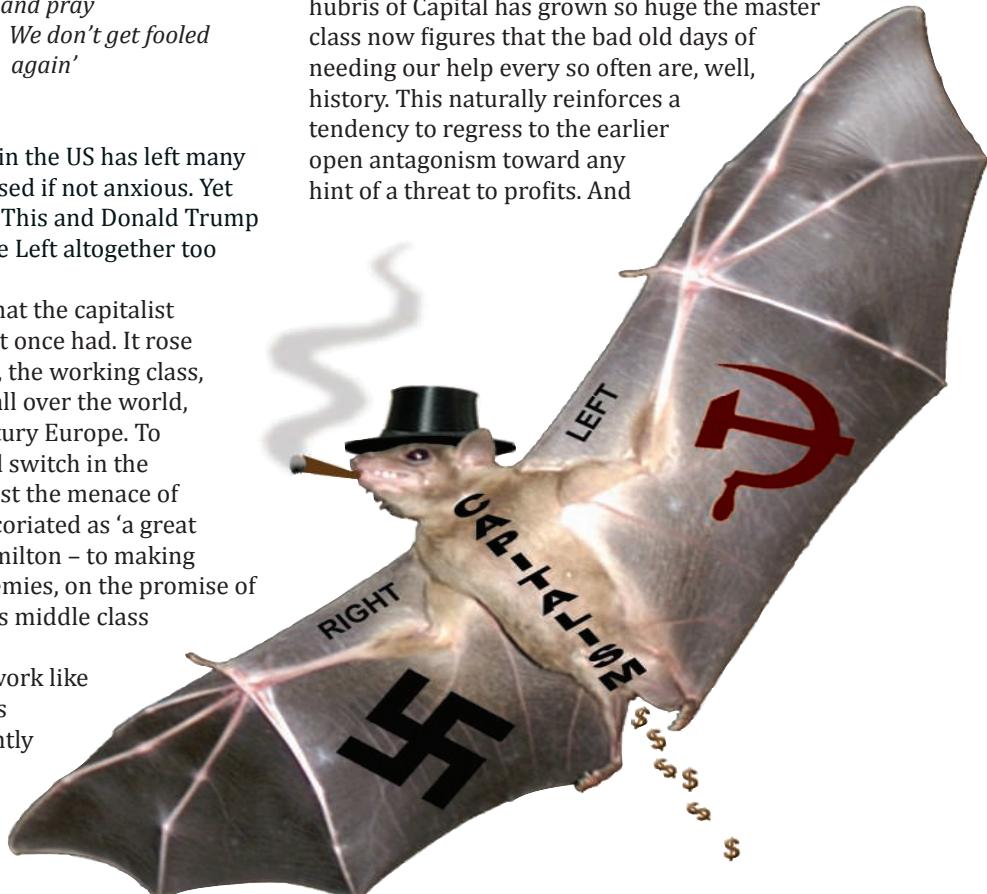
Overall, this new policy tended to work like a charm, though it was not without its problems. For one thing, it inadvertently legitimized long-standing grievances and demands of ‘power to the people’ that traced their roots back to the French Revolution of 1789 — in much the same way as the US would later legitimize the emerging Islamist movement of the 1970s by intervening in Afghanistan.

But the corporate revolution that set in following World War I caused the capitalist class to think better of its earlier flirtation with the forces of democracy and revolution. Increasingly conservative, many capitalists began thinking instead in terms of consolidating their power, a trend which the war had accelerated. Liberal capitalism was morphing into something more cohesive, a richer, denser plutocracy

whose most pressing need was to thwart efforts to modify capitalism’s power structure in favour of the working class.

The ultimate expression of this trend today bears the ungainly names of ‘neo-liberalism’ and ‘neo-conservatism’. Its adepts brandish a massive array of carrot-and-stick policies aimed at controlling or confounding the working class through vast networks of deception, disinformation and — where these fail — naked force. But fussing over the details of class struggle can lead to its own peculiar myopia. Today’s all-powerful Right is actually a very shaky and dysfunctional bandwagon; its factions will in all likelihood begin falling out before too long. And borrowing from Marx’s observation in *The 18th Brumaire*, it is not hard to imagine a follow-up pendulum swing back in the other direction, as neo-New Dealers farcically attempt a comeback, hoping to recover what they can from the preceding wreckage.

So what does this portend, exactly? Historically, politically and economically, the working class has always been the material force underwriting the legitimacy of capitalism. In the works, under the leadership of the oil billionaires, is nothing less than Capital’s gratuitous renunciation of any acknowledgement that it ever depended on the working class — especially for political support. Our Betters no longer need us to move and shake the world, either at times of crisis or in the hurly-burly of business. We are being handed our marching orders as a class. History is over. The hubris of Capital has grown so huge the master class now figures that the bad old days of needing our help every so often are, well, history. This naturally reinforces a tendency to regress to the earlier open antagonism toward any hint of a threat to profits. And



we are in fact already there.

Some of this might even seem convincingly gloomy, as the capitalist class has shown no bashfulness about converting the enormous gobs of surplus value we have given them over the past two centuries into a 1984-style totalitarian control that makes the Nazis look like stuffy Victorians. Leftists continue to build careers around posturing before the monstrous injustices, the sheer wickedness, of the capitalist class; if your head is stuck inside *their* box, Marx’s rhetorical portrait of the challenges faced by a proletarian revolution

The Storming of the Bastille



might well induce a suffocating pessimism.

But in reality, no one can win the class war: capitalists cannot have everything their way any more than those whom they exploit. The capitalist class can only *use* the class struggle to its advantage, and every so often the working class manages to score a few upper-cuts of its own. The real question is the limits to which this struggle can be pushed. At the end of the day, however, it is not anyone's wish-dreams that make the world go round. It is what humans find in the natural world and pass on to future generations that governs the fortunes of economic classes.

We are about to find out just where these limits lie. Capital has been testing them all along (with virtually everyone's benediction), and now it must prove that 'dominating' nature really can be pulled off with impunity. Science is telling us some very alarming things to the contrary. And if we are to take those reports seriously, it is clear that climate change is going to tear the guts out of Capital's average rate of profit, as the cost of responding to 'natural' disasters goes through the roof. However Capital may respond, the skyrocketing cost will overwhelm the fragile defences of the profit economy; the best we can hope for will be an anaemic and erratic global economy struggling endlessly to get back out of the red.

From an ant's perspective, this decay might appear to be different from the fate of all other empires, but the variation is only one of degree.

Politically, all of this is guaranteed to test the working class's loyalty and its willingness to continue pocketing the insults of Capital. So if the capitalist class is now moving triumphantly to inaugurate a neo-liberal/neo-conservative dispensation, cramming its hateful counter-reforms down the throat of an unwilling majority, it is a cinch that the capitalists are naïvely setting themselves up as a pack of unloved élitists wearing

Scrooge costumes – just as Mother Nature, looming over them, prepares to whack the daylights out of their profit system.

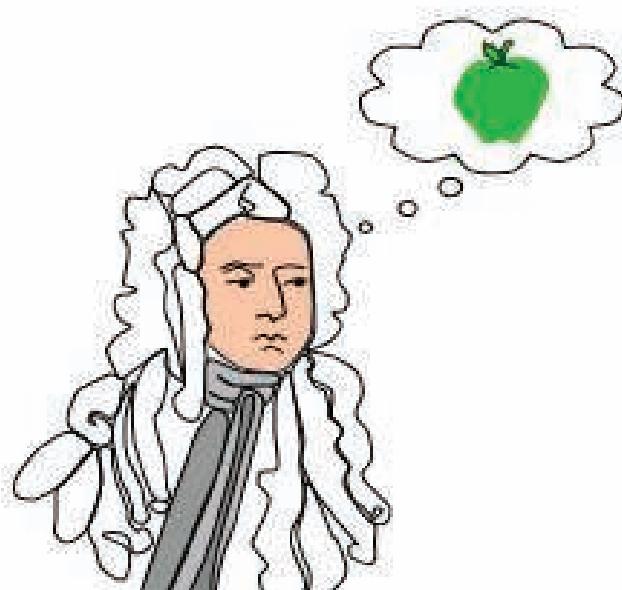
For such a fatuous forgetfulness to set in at *any* juncture would entail serious consequences: for it to set in *now*, as unprecedented systemic stresses generated by climate change start rolling down the pike, will surely prove a fatal error. In forgetting where it came from, the capitalist class courts the loss of critical support at a critical moment and looks down the same road as the destitute Absolute Monarchy that once ruled France before 1789, until an angry and frustrated middle class finally lopped off its head.

The difference is that this time, the anti-capitalist revolution will not be headed by minorities bent on carving out a new status quo for themselves. Strictly speaking, it will not be headed by anyone at all. To the capitalist class it will appear like a frightening pandemic of madness, as the whole world seriously discusses ending the rule of Capital forever. But the only way to 'fix' capitalism is to abolish both wages and capital, and once *that* gate has been opened, the road back becomes irretrievably closed. All functions of leadership collapse into the cold, hard logic of common survival, whose articulation is at the disposal of every thinking person. That is what will make it world history's one and only socialist revolution.

RON ELBERT, World Socialist Party (US)



The of



Where and how do scientific and technological ideas and developments originate? Is it just a matter of individual geniuses, or of responses to economic needs, or is it a combination of various factors?

Clearly there are individuals who make startling contributions to science. Galileo would be one; also Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace, who in Victorian times laid the basis for computers and programs, and who have been described as 'time travellers' (Steven Johnson: *How We Got to Now*).

On the other hand, economic issues can definitely propel a science forward. Down to the end of the eighteenth century, it was generally accepted that god had created the world in 4004 BCE, and fossils were completely mysterious. The science of geology gradually evolved, the Geological Society was founded in London in 1807, and the first comprehensive geological map, of England, Wales and part of Scotland, was completed in 1815 by William Smith (see Simon Winchester: *The Map that Changed the World*). The motivation for this was in part Smith's own determination and intellectual curiosity, but also there were social and economic changes taking place that spurred the study of the country's geological structure. Canals had already had a major impact on trade and the transport of goods, and Smith had himself been the surveyor for the Somerset Coal Canal in the 1790s. The landowners and nobility sponsored him to survey their lands, which had become private property in the various Enclosure Acts, to see if they contained deposits of coal and other minerals. Though he eventually won recognition as the 'Father of English Geology', Smith also spent a period in a debtors' prison, so grateful were those who supported and benefited from his labours.

One argument against the crucial role of individual geniuses is the existence of 'simultaneous inventions', when new discoveries are made by several people within a relatively short space of time. For instance, in Frankfurt, Germany is a statue to Johann Philipp Reis, the inventor of the telephone. But what about Alexander Graham Bell, you may ask? There is a big controversy here. In 1860, Reis demonstrated a rather primitive telephone that could transmit over a hundred meters, but failed to interest anyone else in his invention. It was not until 1875 that Bell developed his phone, but even then there

was a dispute as to whether he or Elisha Gray got there first; and of course the dispute really centred on who registered the first patent. But even Reis was not really the first, as Johnson refers to a French printer named Scott who in 1857 was awarded a patent for a machine that recorded sound but did not play it back; so this was not truly transmitting sound. But details aside, it is clear that the idea of telephony was, well, in the air, and it was not purely down to Bell (or even to Bell and his assistant Thomas Watson).

Another example is that of the electric lightbulb, usually described as invented by Thomas Edison in 1879. But from the 1840s onwards a couple of dozen people had partially invented the bulb, many of them using the same solution as Edison, of a carbon filament suspended in a vacuum. As Johnson writes, 'The lightbulb was the kind of innovation that comes together over decades, in pieces. There was no lightbulb moment in the story of the lightbulb.' Moreover, Edison had assembled a team of knowledgeable people around him, who could make small but crucial improvements to his design.

One of the claims in Johnson's book is what he calls the hummingbird effect: 'An innovation, or cluster of innovations, in one field ends up triggering changes that seem to belong to a different domain altogether.' For instance, the development of the printing press led to a surge in demand for spectacles, as books became more widely available, literacy rates rose and people needed help with reading. This in turn led to further experiments with lenses and hence to the invention of the microscope.

The technology of glass merits further illustration. Glass formed naturally in the Libyan desert millions of years ago, as a result of some very intense heat. In Roman times, glass-makers discovered how to make glass clearer and sturdier, resulting in the installation of glass windows and the manufacture of wine glasses and bottles. Following the sacking of Constantinople in 1204, some glass-makers sailed from Turkey to Venice, where they set up an industry producing luxury vessels for local traders to sell elsewhere. Glass-makers became concentrated on the Venetian island of Murano, where further technical improvements took place. Monks used curved glass as a reading aid in the 12th and 13th centuries, and around this time proper spectacles were developed. As noted earlier, the development of the printing press in the 1440s resulted in increased demand for spectacles.

Shoulders Giants

Various people tried different uses of lenses, leading to the invention of the telescope, and Galileo's discovery of the moons of Jupiter, and the microscope and Robert Hooke's discovery of cells. Then came; later, glass fibres, fibreglass and fibre-optic cables, the material basis of the Internet. Mirrors enabled people to see what they themselves looked like, and may have been responsible for the rise in self-portraiture from around 1400. All in all, writes Johnson, 'it is impossible to imagine the last millennium without transparent glass.'

He goes on to discuss similar examples of technological innovations and their far-reaching social effects in fields such as: artificial cold, frozen food and air-conditioning; developments in hygiene and cleanliness that led to a big reduction in infant mortality and to people washing regularly; accurate time-keeping and its implications for factory discipline and working-class life. He only mentions in passing another example of the importance of economic considerations: the Longitude Prize offered by the British government in 1714 for discovering an accurate chronometer that enabled the determination of longitude at sea, which was essential for navigation and so for exploration and colonisation.

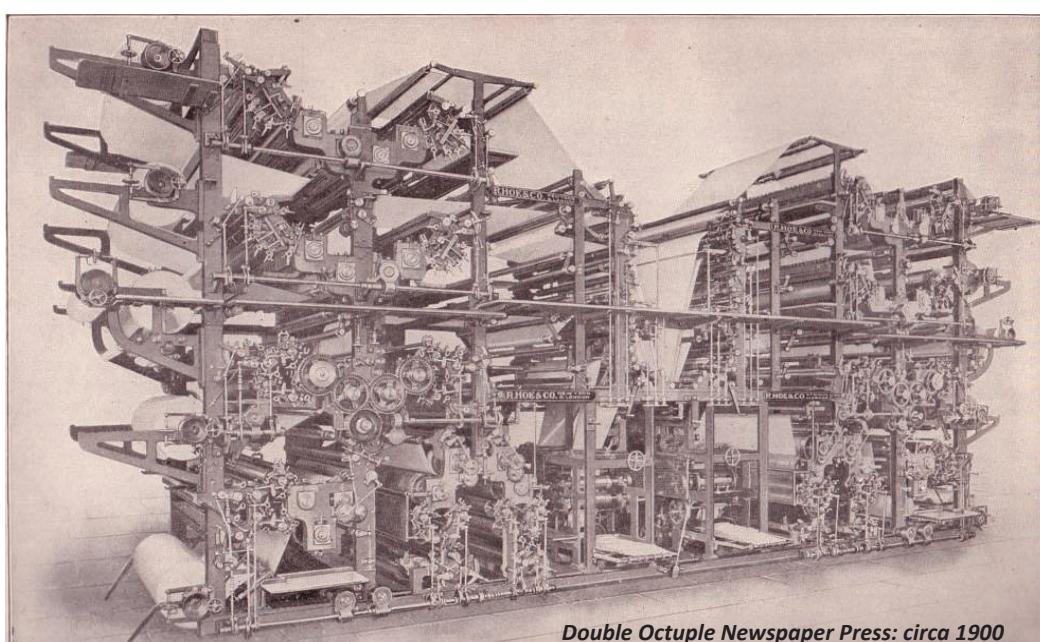
An argument against the overbearing importance of individuals is the celebrated remark of Isaac Newton, 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants', though he was by no means the first person to say something along these lines. Moreover, most research nowadays is carried out by large teams of workers; over 1100 researchers at Google, for instance, while Microsoft

Research is a similar size. Apple is currently building a \$45m research centre in Beijing. Dyson employ over two thousand engineers in their research and development department, so it is not just a matter of the owner's talent for inventing things. The human struggle to understand and influence the natural world is closely related to efforts to expand



production and improve living conditions. Under capitalism, profit is a major motivating force, but under all social systems human ingenuity and co-operation contribute to discoveries and inventions, and people build on what has gone before. Progress is cumulative and often results in unexpected consequences.

PAUL BENNETT



Double Octuple Newspaper Press: circa 1900

Bordiga and the First World War



The concluding article on the political ideas of Amadeo Bordiga up to 1917

In an article in *Avanti*, the newspaper of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), in August 1914 Bordiga identified as a dangerous development 'a sympathetic feeling for the Triple Entente [the alliance between Britain, France and Russia], not only justifying, but praising the attitude of the French socialists, to support that Italian socialists should hasten to fight in defence of France'. This was to become the position of Mussolini, at that point editor of *Avanti*.

For Bordiga, the concept of 'fatherland' was by definition anti-socialist and a defensive war on its behalf inconceivable. In September, in an article in *Il Socialista* on 'Avanti and the war', he addressed Mussolini's attitude openly, criticising the ambiguity of the line he had taken on the war in the party's newspaper.

The 'Manifesto against the War' by the leadership and the parliamentary group of the party was published soon after, of which Mussolini claimed authorship. However, a few days later Mussolini's famous article on 'active and operative neutrality' appeared in *Avanti* and which led the party to dismiss him as editor. Bordiga responded to Mussolini's article with an editorial in *Il Socialista* entitled 'For an active and operative antimilitarism'. In it he wrote of the ambiguity of the concept of 'neutrality':

'The neutrality concept has for subject not socialists, but the State. We want the State to remain neutral with regard to the war, absolutely, until the end, whatever happens. In order to achieve this we act upon the State, against it, in the field and with the means of the class struggle. So we do not want to disarm. Our war is a permanent war.'

When Mussolini then started to attack the PSI, Bordiga, writing in *Il Socialista*, launched an appeal to boycott him. Finally, in December 1914 Mussolini's 'socialist' story came to an end. Because of his continuous attacks on the PSI he was expelled from the party. Bordiga reported this news in *Il Socialista* with satisfaction, and stressed that 'convictions against traitors are without appeal'.

Another series of his articles appeared in *Avanguardia* entitled 'Socialism of yesterday before the war of today', which give us some interesting insights into his thinking.

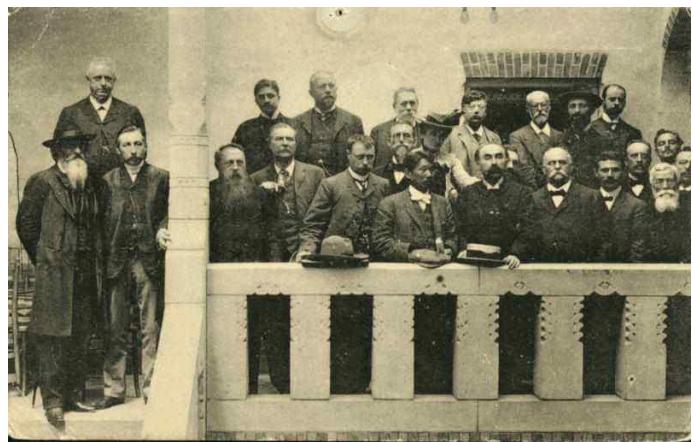
'The war... is certainly a destruction of capital, but the bourgeoisie as a class cares more for the preservation of the juridical relations which allow it to live off the work of the large majority than for the material possession of capital. Those relations, basic in every nation, consist of the right to monopolise the means of labour, which in turn are also the product of the work of the proletarian class. Thus for the proletariat the war is disastrous from all points of view while for the bourgeoisie it is a damage to material wealth, but it preserves and strengthens the potential relations for rebuilding such wealth, because it causes the class struggle to

fade and turns it into national glorification.'

Modern states, he insisted, with their 'democratic regimes', maintain in economic slavery the working class who can be mobilized in 24 hours for the war front. For this reason, he noted, a revolutionary uprising will always have more chance of success in time of peace than on the eve of a war.

Bordiga, who still had some faith in the Second International, identified the real failure of socialism in the support of the socialist parties of France and Germany for the war. He argued that the leaders of those parties often due to their 'superior culture' (i.e. bourgeois culture) had too many links with bourgeois ideologies and felt more represented by 'the nation' than by socialism. So socialism must 'replace on a more solid basis antimilitarist action and review in a more revolutionary sense its parliamentary action'.

On the national question, Bordiga developed the notion that wars now were carried out by states and not by nations.



He therefore distinguished wars of national unification from imperialist wars and pointed to the justification, still used today, about spreading democracy at the point of a bayonet. According to Bordiga, this was obviously a bourgeois excuse. He published an article on the principle of nationality in *Avanti* in January 1915. His position on this is interesting if compared with the discussion on it between Luxemburg and Lenin, of which Bordiga was unaware at the time. He developed his own independent ideas on the national question, in which he distinguished wars of national unification (which he was prepared to support) from imperialist wars. According to him, cultural identity did not match the concept that the bourgeois state had of the 'nation'. The state cared about economic interests not about cultural identity.

He went on to state, in clear contrast to the left reformists:

'Pacifism? No. We are advocates of violence. We are admirers of the conscious violence of those who rise up against the oppression of the strongest, admirers of the anonymous violence of the masses, which revolts for



freedom... But legal violence, official, that the authorities are free to use in a disciplined way, ... that violence... is disgusting and repugnant.'

Several times he cited Karl Liebknecht for his anti-militarism and his speech in the Reichstag on 2 December 1914, opposing the war and the approval given by the German Social Democrats to war credits. Bordiga explicitly linked his own antimilitarism to that of Karl Liebknecht, the Social Democratic members of the Russian Duma, the Serbian Socialist Party, the British Independent Labour Party (probably referring to an article by J. Bruce Glasier in *Avanti* in which he mentioned Keir Hardie's position in the Labour Party) and the anarchist Sébastien Faure in France. This list shows that he was not taking into account the other policies of these figures, only their antimilitarism.

On the Russian revolution, we limit ourselves to Bordiga's writings in 1917. This is because post-Lenin his political views changed significantly. In 1917 Bordiga wrote a series of articles in *Avanguardia* entitled 'The Russian revolution in a socialist interpretation'. He saw the Russian revolution as a phenomenon that has already lasted fifty years. In contrast to Antonio Gramsci, who while supporting the revolution without reservation saw in it a contradiction with Marxian thought, Bordiga commented that, while it might seem that 'the most rigorous application of the lines of the Marxian

system' was ill adapted to a politically underdeveloped country like Russia, 'here a strong Party was formed – perhaps the most orthodox in the world'. He was referring mainly to the Bolshevik movement. In fact, a few lines later he wrote of them that 'the extremist current is the most genuine ... wants peace, it refuses even transitory collaboration with the other classes and calls for the seizure of power to apply the Communist Programme'. He noted, however, as did many other socialists, that socialist methods did not sit well with a country mainly consisting of immense masses of peasants.

Bordiga concluded his series of *Avanguardia* articles in December 1917 commenting on the triumph of the 'Maximalists', i.e. the Bolsheviks.

'Finally, the government is overthrown', he wrote, 'and the seizure of power by the Soviets, in which the extremists have become the large majority, has taken place. While we write, in the jumble of contradictory and biased news coming to us, it is understood that socialists work to realize a programme along simple and grand lines – the same one as that of the *Communist Manifesto* – that is the expropriation of the private owners from their means of production, and in the meantime proceeding logically and consequently with getting rid of the war.'

Thus began Bordiga's transition to Bolshevism and Leninism for which he is most well-known. The pre-Lenin Bordiga, however, showed himself to have had a clear idea of what revolutionary Marxist socialism meant. He was an intransigent, anti-reformist, class struggle socialist, though with a predisposition for anarchist-type direct action including the use of violence. Post-Lenin he was to lean towards Blanquist centralism, from which we can only distance ourselves.

CESCO



An abandoned Soviet labour camp (gulag) where the hopes of all those, like Bordiga, that the Bolshevik revolution would be a form of socialism died.

Who's to blame for capitalism?

Capitalists are not the 'real culprits'. The real culprit is capitalism i.e., the capital/wage labour relation of production – the capitalist mode of production. Just as wage workers are slaves to wages, so also capitalists are slaves to profit who collectively constitute the necessary functionaries of capital.

Capitalists are merely capital personified. The existence of capital signifies the existence of the two interdependent and interrelated classes. Neither of the two sides have any respite until capitalism is done away with through world socialist revolution, which requires the maturity of two necessary conditions: (1) *subjective*, i.e., the revolutionary will and organization of the working class, and (2) *objective*, i.e., material abundance on a world scale. It is an observable fact that productive and potential abundance on a world scale has existed progressively since about the beginning of the past century, whereas the other condition – the revolutionary will and worldwide organization i.e., class consciousness and an independent organization and movement – is still lagging behind.

Long ago in 1865 Karl Marx urged upon the workers of the world: "Instead of the conservative motto, '*A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!*' they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword, '*Abolition of the wages system!*'" (*Value, Price and Profit*, 1865).

Thus, the historical responsibility for the abolition of wages slavery, the abolition of capitalism rests solely on the initiative of an independent organization of the working class as a *class-for-itself*. Then why blame the capitalists? Historically, they are not responsible for the ongoing state of affairs of society. They had accomplished their own capitalist revolution eventually



dismantling feudalism – the landed aristocracy and serfdom having drawn into this task their workers as its driving force around the world. They had duped workers with their buzzwords – Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, which is the national motto of France. That is all. Thus they had captured political power and then retained their buzzwords as a propaganda piece in their history books. Thereafter they had and have nothing to do with the next revolution in history – the World Socialist Revolution. Rather they are quite helpless regarding this task.

Socialist revolution vacillates because of the utter confusion created by the media – abetted by rightists, centrists and the leftists squaring the circle for capital – brainwashing and corrupting with their ubiquitous ideology glorifying nationalism, patriotism, the employment system, competition and private interests. This ideology has blinded and derailed the world's workers about what is to be done. Pitifully, most workers of the world are still confined within capitalist perspectives. So if you want to blame anybody, you have to blame the workers of the world for not assuming and accomplishing their long pending revolutionary task.

Binay Sarkar



Growth of what?

IN AN article in the *New York Times* (6 February), 'The Economic Growth that Experts Can't Count', Patricia Cohen reported on criticism by some economists of increases in Gross Domestic Product as an adequate measure of economic growth. GDP, she wrote, 'is designed to measure production and just production – not welfare or happiness.'

'At its most basic, G.D.P. is calculated by looking at prices – the price of materials, workers, overhead and so on that it costs to make a product and the price that consumers in turn pay for that product. And while prices can be measured, they don't necessarily reflect the value of quality and experience. As far as G.D.P. is concerned, a delectable \$20 meal that would wow Julia Child is equal to a rubbery, tasteless one that costs the same amount. The growing suspicion, however, is that in a digital world overflowing with free services like Facebook, Google and YouTube, price is an increasingly ill-suited proxy for value.'

This is true. GDP does not measure

use-value (Cohen's 'value of quality and experience'); it measures only *exchange-value* expressed as price, or monetary value. This is the only sort of value that capitalism is concerned with increasing. Although what is produced does have a use-value (otherwise no one would want to buy it), this is not the aim of production; it's profit, the difference between what a capitalist firm pays to produce something (the exchange-value of the materials, energy, labour-power, etc) and what it obtains from selling it (the original exchange value + the new exchange value added in the course of production).

GDP is a measure of the exchange-value of new wealth produced as commodities in a country in the course of a year. 'Growth' is the amount this increases from one year to the next (when it does increase, that is, as from time to time it falls, as after the Crash of 2008).

GDP is calculated by adding up the 'value added' (the term actually used by national accounts statisticians) in each branch of industry or line of activity. Basically, this is the difference between what, apart from labour power, was paid for the materials, etc, to produce goods or services and the price obtained from selling it. In Marxian terms, this would be very roughly, surplus value (s) + variable capital (v) as the wages and salaries of

productive workers.

Supporters of capitalism say that growth in GDP is a good thing as it makes us all better off. They argue that, if the population remains the same or increases at a slower rate than GDP, each person has more. On average maybe, but this does not mean that everybody actually gets more. That would be to assume that the new wealth was evenly divided, which of course it is not. In practice, given the inequality of wealth ownership that is the basis of capitalism, 'to him that hath shall be given' and the rich get richer while the rest of us stay more or less the same.

In any event, as Cohen noted, GDP is not a measure of human welfare. It does not measure use-value. In fact, it includes products that are useful to capitalism but of no use to human welfare, such as arms and financial services. Bourgeois economists get into difficulty over GDP because, according to them, a good's price reflects its 'utility'. So they think that GDP is a measure of use-value as well as of exchange-value. But GDP can't count both as that would be to compare apples and pears.

Ironically, Marxian economics sees GDP for what it is – a measure only of the total amount of new exchange-value created by labour in the course of a year.



The Extremes Of Exploitation

ONE OF the many signs that society is shifting into an even nastier variant of capitalism is the growth of slavery, something it's easy to think of as obsolete since the 19th century, but which has never gone away. Today, the number of people kept as slaves worldwide could be between 21 million (according to the International Labour Organisation) and 46 million (Global Slavery Index), an accurate figure being hard to find in what is, by definition, a shadowy, underground industry. 13,000 people in the UK are thought to be living in slavery.

Slavery involves using fraud or coercion to recruit, harbour, transport or provide someone for forced labour, including prostitution. People might be enticed to accept a job, perhaps from overseas, only to then have their documents withheld by their new employers and be made to work under the threat of violence. They are usually kept in cramped, dilapidated accommodation owned by the slavemasters.

As slavery has increased in Britain, so has awareness of it. Channel 4's recent documentary *The Modern British Slave Trade* (Channel 4) was a useful, no-frills insight into the police investigation of two cases: a family-run slave camp of block-paving workers in Gloucestershire and a Cambridgeshire-based gang who exploited farm labourers.

The traffickers target people who need money and who are living on the fringes of mainstream society. In the UK, some of those kept in slavery travelled here from Eastern Europe or Vietnam hoping for a better life after having been given empty promises about work and accommodation. In Cambridgeshire, Eastern Europeans gather in Wisbech

town centre at night waiting for the vans which take them to farms to work. In Scotland, especially, some nail salons are staffed by Vietnamese workers paid little and kept in squalor. Other recruits for the slave trade come from within Britain, vulnerable through poverty or isolation. Some traffickers target homeless people because it's cheaper and easier to use them than paying to transport people from overseas, and also because they're less likely to be missed. Vans regularly turn up at soup kitchens or outside homeless hostels looking for desperate people who haven't heard the warnings. Women are a 'very valuable commodity' who are often coerced into sham marriages and sex work, after being threatened with having their organs 'harvested' so the alternatives don't sound as bad.

Working days are as long as 19 hours, without any rights or safeguards. The police investigators film one of the slaves being beaten up; punishments are a constant threat. What wages the slaves receive are taken back by their owners through extortionate rents charged for sub-standard housing. Added to this are charges for food, transport to work and other spurious expenses, leaving the slaves with a few pence, or nothing, or in debt. The shared houses and camps don't tend to have locked gates or high fences, but escape is prevented by threats of being killed when recaptured. Many people wouldn't have anywhere else to go anyway. Slaves from abroad are unlikely to get another source of income (including state benefits), and if their ID has been taken, then they would find it even harder to cope in an unfamiliar country. Slavery, in a twisted way, gives them a place in society. Some of those no longer seen as

any use end up getting 'fly-tipped'. It is thought that this is what happened to a slave whose body was found outside the Gloucestershire camp.

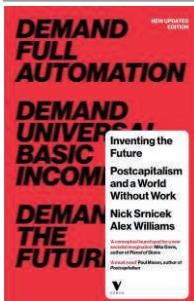
In the programme, the slave masters' plush, expensive homes are raided by the police and they are arrested. 289 offences were prosecuted in England and Wales under The Modern Slavery Act 2015 in its first year. The Act consolidated and amended existing slavery and trafficking legislation, originally dating back two hundred years. Some experts criticised the Act for not focusing enough on the needs of victims, who are likely to need counselling and rehabilitation. A few safe houses are available for slaves who have been rescued or escape, but they still face an uncertain, difficult future. Adjusting to a different life, whatever it is, may be a struggle, especially if they have been trapped for years or even decades. When questioned by the police, some deny they have been kept as slaves, through fear of being deported, or reprisals, or having been brainwashed into thinking their life is acceptable.

Slavery is the most extreme way in which people get exploited. Profiting from someone else's labour power is built in to the system, of course, so the difference between slavery and ordinary employment is one of degree, not kind. The vast majority of us are commodities to be bought and sold on the labour market, of which the slave trade is part. Slavery is possible because society makes some people vulnerable and desperate enough to fall into it, and others greedy and cruel enough to exploit them.

MIKE FOSTER

No More Work?

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams: *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. Verso £9.99.



THIS IS in some ways similar to Paul Mason's *Postcapitalism*, reviewed in the September 2015 *Socialist Standard*. Indeed Mason is quoted on the front cover as describing this as 'a must-read'.

Like Mason, Srnicek and Williams discuss the possibility of overcoming scarcity and eliminating boring work; unlike him, they give relatively little attention to the information economy, though they do refer to the importance of technological developments and automation, and say that any vision of the future must be based on current tendencies. They also emphasise the likelihood of 'surplus population', with capitalism needing less labour to produce the same output, so large numbers of people will have trouble getting 'decent' jobs.

They begin by criticising 'folk politics', a common-sense kind of local political activism that is prevalent on the left. This, they say, is not wrong but it is not enough by itself: it is fine for movements such as Occupy, but is problematic for attempts to overcome capitalism and climate change, as it is too small-scale. Small interventions are unlikely to change the socio-economic system, and acts of resistance are defensive rather than active. To the extent that folk politics can be seen as similar to the policy of pursuing reforms to capitalism, these remarks are unexceptionable. Some other good points are made in passing, for instance that consensus decision-making can lead to the adoption of lowest-common-denominator demands.

The alternative to folk politics is to be more ambitious and aim for a post-work world, by means of 'non-reformist reforms' (compare Mason's 'revolutionary reformism'). The four minimal demands of this are: full automation, reduction of the working week (possibly via a three-day weekend), provision of a basic income and diminution of the work ethic. As part of this, 'the demand for a post-work world revels in the liberation of desire, abundance and freedom.' The authors also refer to 'the possibility of production based on flexibility, decentralisation and post-scarcity for some goods.'

It is accepted that there are various ways of realising such a post-work future. One would be ecologically unsustainable, while another would be misogynist, with women still bound to household work. Srnicek and Williams opt for the leftist version, which among other things

involves open borders, a reduction of both waged and unwaged work, an improved welfare state and a global basic income. It is acknowledged that this would still have commodity production and private property, so would not be post-capitalist, but 'would be an immensely better world than the one we have now'.

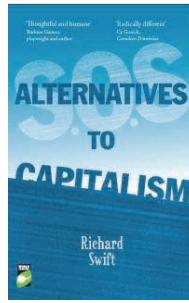
But, just as with Mason's book, the reader is forced to ask, why just advocate this, why not abolish commodities and wage labour? The authors do refer at one point to the aim 'to build an economy in which people are no longer dependent upon wage labour for survival', and they also talk about full unemployment (which is not clear, but might mean an end to the employment relation). Moreover, despite the sub-title, their vision of future society is not really post-work either, as the aim is just to reduce necessary labour as much as possible. So they are pretty inconsistent as to what they want, and moreover they see their proposed reforms as taking decades to achieve, so it is hardly a matter of 'something now'.

The book makes some interesting points, but, while Srnicek and Williams criticise folk politics as too timid, their own demands are essentially reformist and so are themselves not ambitious enough.

PB

No alternative

S.O.S. Alternatives to Capitalism. By Richard Swift. New Internationalist Publications. 2016



In this revised, second edition one-time editor of the *New Internationalist* Richard Swift surveys various attempts to counter capitalism over the years. He begins with USSR-

style state capitalism (which he misleadingly calls state socialism) and Social Democrat parliamentary reformism. Of the former he makes the point that:

'In retrospect it could easily be claimed that orthodox state communism was not really an alternative to capitalism at all but merely a transitional form of it that allowed certain large 'backward' societies, hitherto blocked in their development path, to move towards their own peculiar model of autocratic capitalism.'

As to the Social Democrats and Labourites, they

evolved as mere alternative managers of traditional-style capitalism.

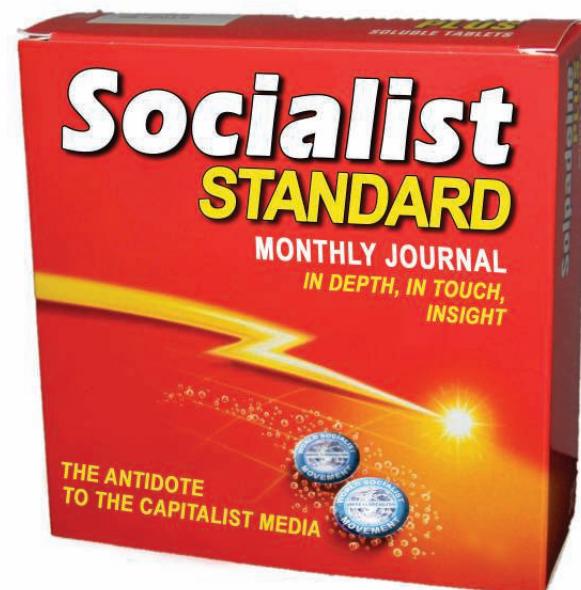
He goes on to dismiss Marxists for still talking about the class struggle, anarchists for living in the past, and Italian autonomists for being too vague (he could have added for being incomprehensible). What he likes are movements in the South (Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil) and indigenous communities resisting the impact of capitalism.

Despite the title, most of the book is taken up with describing opposition rather than alternatives to capitalism, and not so much to capitalism as such but to 'untrammeled', 'rapacious' and 'unregulated' capitalism. It is not until page 156 of this 184-page book that he makes the point that 'people need to know what you are for rather than just what you are against.'

A valid point but, as in so many books like this, what is proposed is disappointing. In Swift's case, 'degrowth' (reducing production and consumption), 'bringing finance under control', and a universal guaranteed minimum money income. There is no understanding that, to be able to control 'growth', whether to stop, increase, or re-orient it towards meeting needs – and to end what he had earlier called experiencing 'the economy as a kind of external force disconnected from human will' – ownership of the means of production will have to pass to society as a whole, with the consequent disappearance of the market and market forces.

All Swift comes up with about ownership of the means of production is vague talk about co-operatives operating within a system where there is still finance and money incomes – which wouldn't really be an alternative to capitalism.

ALB



Cuban poster art

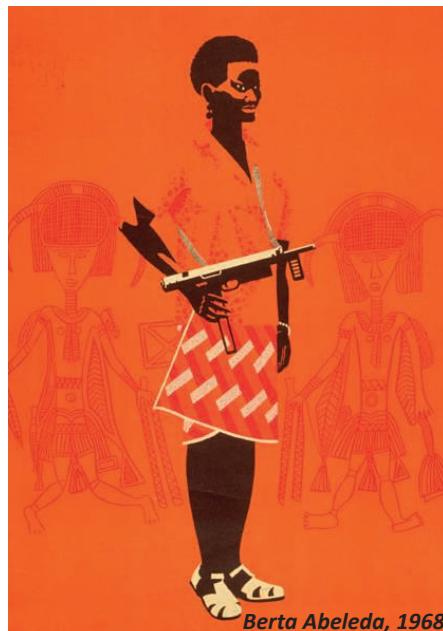
Art of Solidarity: Cuban Posters for African Liberation 1967-1989,
International Slavery Museum,
Liverpool, 13 January to 18 June 2017

'ART OF Solidarity' is an exhibition of thirty two rarely-seen posters produced by Cuban group 'Organisation in Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (OSPAAL)'. Posters were created using an offset method and silk screen techniques combining art, photographs and text. Each colour required a day to dry. Quite correct is the comment that 'This created posters with striking images and strong political messages.'

It slightly glibly goes on to say 'Designers used the imagery of both traditional and modern weapons to symbolise resistance and political power ... Every poster by female artist Berta Abelenda Fernandez includes some sort of weapon from spears to bazookas often in a witty unexpected way.' OSPAAAL itself used the logo of a clenched fist around a rifle.

'Solidarity can mean many things ranging from military support to foreign aid. In the 1970s and 1980s, Fidel Castro sent over 60,000 troops, advisors and doctors to seventeen African nations in support of various liberation movements in Angola', claims one description, adding 'solidarity can also be expressed through public support, for example, posters' and the critical role played by Cuba in ending apartheid. These definitions (of 'solidarity' and 'liberation') and connections might be more ambiguous than is implied here.

On the more unambiguous and positive side, and in contrast to Stalin's enforcement of the 'socialist realism' art



Berta Abelenda, 1968

style, was Fidel Castro's encouragement in 1977: 'Our enemy is imperialism, not abstract art.' And one writer notes that in the Cuban posters, 'There are few examples of hero worship unlike Mao in China or Lenin in the Soviet Union.' Writer Lincoln Cushing comments 'the non-commercial mass poster was the direct fruit of this revolution, a conscious application of art in the service of social improvement.' It would be hard to disagree that Cuban poster art was anything but flourishing, if the claim elsewhere that Cuba produced some twelve thousand posters specifically means differing designs rather than just prints.

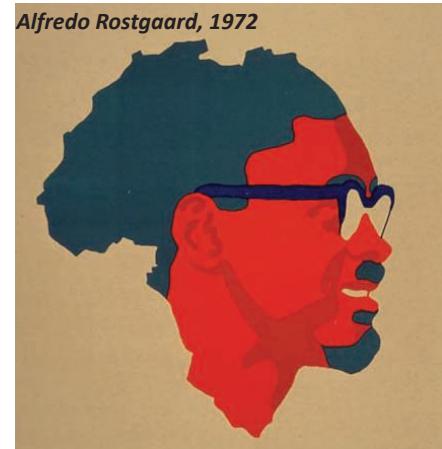
Cuba's historical links with Africa were real, as during the transatlantic slave trade some half a million Africans were transported to Cuba. There was also a

respect artistically, that meant many posters incorporate cultural objects or references dispelling the idea that Africa had no history, art or civilisation prior to European contact. Posters were produced for Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Congo, Namibia, South Africa, Guinea and Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. However, it would be remiss not to mention here that multiple military interventions were made by Cuba in more than one African country.

Should you visit the exhibition, then plan to spare an hour for the film screening (on a loop) 'Cuba: An African Odyssey' (directed by El Tahri) and visit on one of the days of the free events (20/3, 13/4, 1/5, 15/5, 5/6). More images of these posters and information can be found in the book 'Revolution: Cuban Poster Art' (2003) and the website <http://docspopuli.org>.

As a final comment, as the influential African intellectual, the late Amílcar Cabral said on revolution in Africa: we do not want exploitation, even by black people.

DJW



Alfredo Rostgaard, 1972

The Environment

Summer School 2017
21st – 23rd July
Fircroft College,
Birmingham

These days, concerns about the environment tend to get pushed into the background by issues like Brexit, Trump's presidency and ongoing austerity measures. But climate change, pollution and extinctions don't go away just because the headlines are filled with other events. 2016 was the warmest year on record, with implications for sea levels and habitats; more and more waste is produced for future generations to deal with, and many hundreds of species continue to become extinct every year.

Legislation places some restrictions

on the use of dangerous materials, hunting and waste disposal, for example. However, legislators can only work within a system which is structured to safeguard the interests of the wealthy elite, rather than everyone. And of course laws don't always prevent environmentally-damaging methods from being used if they save or make money. Capitalism turns the natural world into a resource to be exploited for a profit.

The Socialist Party argues that the environment can only be managed responsibly if society as a whole is managed co-operatively and in everyone's interests. If our industries and services were owned and run in common, then we would be able to produce what we need and want in the

most reasonable, sustainable way.

Our weekend of talks and discussions looks at the current state of the environment, and its prospects for the future we make for it.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100. The concessionary rate is £50. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online at spgb.net/summerschool2017 or through the QR code. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk



50 Years Ago

Bank Rate Cuts



BANK RATE is generally regarded among the economic "experts" as a means of controlling the economy.

Put up the Rate, runs their argument, and you slow down production; put it down and production will start booming.

None of the experts have ever explained why, if it is really so easy to control capitalism, the economy ever gets into a crisis.

The Chancellor's decision to reduce Bank Rate by one half percent was greeted as a stimulant to British industry.

"One positive gain," said the *Daily Telegraph*, "it (the government) hopes to see ... is a greater willingness among businessmen to proceed with their capital investment programmes."

Since September 1953, when Bank Rate was 3 1/2 percent,

there have been twenty seven changes. Both Conservative and Labour governments agree that Bank Rate helps to control the economy, both have upped it to seven percent in times of crisis.

But none of these changes have altered a course of economic events which was already set. They have, in fact, been made in response to those courses; they have been not an influence but a reaction.

Callaghan's panic seven percent last July was no exception and neither is the latest reduction. William Davis, the

Guardian's Financial Editor, put it:

"I gather that the Bank of England advised the Chancellor a few weeks ago that a half percent cut in Bank Rate couldn't be delayed much longer."

The economy of capitalism, as so many Chancellors have found out, cannot be controlled by Bank Rate changes or any other juggling. The Labour Party should know this, perhaps better than anyone.

For they once had a mighty Plan to defeat economic crises. But just like the Tories, they end up doing what the Bank of England tells them.

(From "Review", *Socialist Standard*, March 1967)



ACTION REPLAY

'Crack cocaine style' gambling

THE TRADE body for bookmakers has criticised a report by MPs on fixed – odds betting terminals (FOBTs) after it called for the maximum stake to be reduced from £100 to £2. The recommendations came from the All Party Parliamentary Group as it came to the end of a six month inquiry into FOBTs, following growing concern about the harm being caused on Britain's high streets by the machines. The high-stake, high-speed electronic casino games have been branded 'the crack cocaine of gambling' by campaigners, who argue that they are dangerously addictive (*i* newspaper, 1 February).

Carolyn Harris, leading the group of MPs involved, said 'these machines are easily accessed in the most deprived areas, sucking money out of the pockets of cash strapped families', adding 'there is nothing responsible about how FOBTs are currently being operated.'

However, the Association of British Bookmakers (ABB) warned that such a move would be a 'hammer blow' to high street bookies and would threaten thousands of jobs in the industry (British bookmakers currently employ more than

43,000 staff). It demanded an immediate inquiry by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards into the group of MPs, saying the body was a 'front for vested commercial interests.' Malcolm George, the ABB chief executive, commented that 'Betting shops are closing at the rate of more than 100 a year and if the findings of this rigged report are implemented it could spell the beginning of the end for the high street bookmaker.'

The All Party Parliamentary Group are disappointed that the bookmakers have declined to participate. 'We fear this is a reflection of their denial of the problems associated with FOBTs and reluctance on their part to speak to policy makers about appropriate regulation.'

Around £3.3bn was generated by the high street betting sector in the year to March 2016, according to the latest figures from the Gambling Commission. Over the same period online gambling operators generated £4.5bn, the National Lottery contributed £3.4bn and £1bn came from traditional casinos and



contribute more than £1bn a year in taxes according to the ABB.

Evidently the gambling industry is a lucrative business with FOBTs becoming its new 'cash cow'. Despite the human misery caused by this form of gambling the bookmakers will fight for FOBTs to be promoted in their betting shops with little if any regulation – yet another example of profits being more important than people under capitalism.

KEVIN

OBITUARY

Gary Slapper

We regret to have to report the death of Gary Slapper, a member of long standing who first joined the Party in 1980. Gary was part of a large group of new young members who entered the Party around this time, many centred on his own branch in Islington, which became a particularly vibrant and energetic one throughout the 1980s. Gary played a very full part in expanding the branch to the extent that from small beginnings it became the biggest in the Party. He was a regular speaker and debater for the Party at this time and also regularly spoke on the outdoor platform at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park.

In addition, he was a writer, contributing many fine articles to the *Socialist Standard* over the years under his pen-name of Gary Jay. A number of these focused on aspects of popular

culture, often reflecting Gary's deep interests in phenomena such as 'new wave' music.

Over time, Gary also pursued a very successful academic career – after a spell at Staffordshire University he became Professor and Head of Law at the Open University, before latterly becoming Director of New York University in London. Many readers will be aware that for years Gary was also a specialist law columnist for *The Times*, writing articles focusing on unusual and quirky legal cases, and which were illustrations of his good humour and keen eye for the absurd. He also wrote several well-regarded books in the field.

Gary's death at the age of 58 was sudden and unexpected, and a tragic loss. He was a genuinely popular figure and a highly congenial man who will be missed greatly. The Party extends its condolences – including to his siblings Clifford and Maxine, both Party members.

Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our Meetup site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

London, Chiswick

Tuesday 7 March, 8pm

CAPITALISM AND GLOBALISATION: CAN THE CLOCK BE TURNED BACK?

Speaker: Adam Buick

Meeting Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN

MARCH 2017

LONDON

Clapham

Sunday 19 March, 3.00 pm

The Fall of Tsarism

Speaker: Adam Buick

Venue: Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN

APRIL 2017

WAKEFIELD

Saturday 1 April, 1.00 pm

Wakefield Socialist History Group

British Socialism and World War One

Paul Bennett from the Socialist Party will be one of the speakers

Venue: The Red Shed, 18 Vicarage Street South, Wakefield, WF11 1QX

LONDON

Clapham

Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 April. 10.30 am to 5.00 pm both days

Annual Conference

Venue: Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN

EC Meeting

Saturday 4 March 2017, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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p18: Delacroix, Liberty leading the people, 1830

p19: Exploitation, Channel 4

p21: Day of Solidarity with the people of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, 1968 by Berta Abelénda Fernández, Docs Populi Archive; Day of Solidarity with the Congo, 1972 by Alfrédo Juan González Rostgaard, Docs Populi Archive

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p24: T-shirt, ANAL Facebook page

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

REAR VIEW



Constipated reformists

'ANAL squatting collective takes over Qatari general's £17m London townhouse' (rt.com, 2 February). With a name like that, the Autonomous Nation of Anarchist Libertarians have achieved one of their aims - exposure! They wish to draw our attention to the 'problem' of growing homelessness alongside thousands of properties in London alone, and over 200,000 in England, which have been unoccupied for more than six months. ANAL is supported by a number of groups concerned with housing and homelessness, including Architects for Social Housing who tweeted *Homes for people, not for profit*. Indeed. But because housing is produced for profit there is no possibility of a rational approach to housing within capitalism. Engels made this clear as far back as 1872: 'As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself' (The Housing Question).

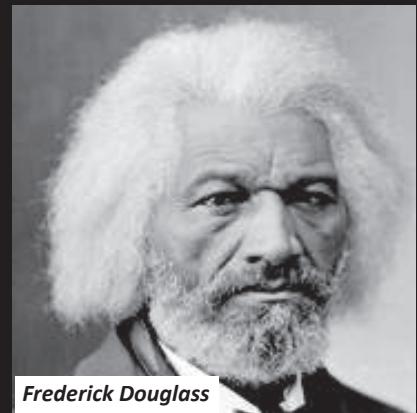
Clueless

'Comments President Donald Trump made Wednesday at the White House during a Black History Month event left some people scratching their heads. During a *listening session*, Trump praised abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who died in 1895. He mentioned Douglass as 'an example of somebody who has done an amazing job and is being recognized more and more, I notice,' Trump said' (kansascity.com, 1 February). On this performance alone, Trump's future is certain - as presenter of *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*. He could well be joined by the anarchist Professor David Graeber, who thinks that the clown Trump's victory 'had proved that anarchists' diagnosis of society's ills was correct' (nytimes, 2 February) - not to mention their disdain for democracy - and that 'people want something radically different'. The Doctor sees only symptoms - hence his fervent support for Occupy who 'had elevated income inequality to the top of the Democratic political agenda!' - not the disease. Douglass was better informed: 'The old master class was not deprived of the power of life and death, which was the soul of the relation of master and slave. They could not, of course, sell their former slaves, but they retained the power to starve them to death, and wherever this power is held there is the power of slavery. He who can say to his fellow-man, *You shall serve me or starve*, is a master and his subject is a slave....Though no longer a slave, he is in a thralldom grievous and intolerable, compelled to work for whatever his employer is pleased to pay him.' (Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, 1892).

Shafted

'Canadian Mint Worker Sentenced To 30 Months For Smuggling \$140,000 Of Gold In His Rectum' (zerohedge.com, 2 February).

A headline you will not see in a socialist world without workers and crime - or your money back!



Frederick Douglass

Sex and the 1%

'One of the world's most exclusive sex clubs for the rich and powerful has opened its doors to the public - but it will set you back a hefty £1,500-a-night. You'll also have to jet to Los Angeles, where members at the Snctm sex club in Los Angeles - who sign a blood oath to join - are also splashing out an eye-watering £60,000-a-year for unlimited access to special rooms and privileges at the orgies' (mirror.co.uk, 2 February). We the 99% are expected to find the means to raise the next generation of the working class. This has been so for centuries. Who better to comment on this situation than the Marquis De Sade: 'Everywhere I could reduce men into two classes both equally pitiable; in the one the rich who was the slave of his pleasures; in the other the unhappy victims of fortune; and I never found in the former the desire to be better or in the latter the possibility of becoming so, as though both classes were working for their common misery...I saw the rich continually increasing the chains of the poor, while doubling his own luxury, while the poor, insulted and despised by the other, did not even receive the encouragement necessary to bear his burden. I demanded equality and was told it was utopian; but I soon saw those who denied its possibility were those who would lose by it...' (Aline et Valcour, ou le Roman philosophique, 1788)

FREE LUNCH

